

# **Annual Report**

## **Montana State Special Education Advisory Panel**

**July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003**



**Prepared by the Montana Office of Public Instruction  
Linda McCulloch, Superintendent  
Division of Special Education  
PO Box 202501  
Helena, Montana 59620-2501**

## Chair's Report

The State Special Education Advisory Panel has had a busy and productive year. We have reviewed the progress the state is making on strategies identified in its state improvement plan and biennial performance report and have begun the process of self-assessment for purposes of determining what, if any, additional strategies must be implemented to achieve more positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

At our first meeting of the year, John Copenhaver, Director of Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC), and Bob Runkel, Director of Special Education, provided an orientation to the panel on the continuous improvement planning process. This activity, combined with a teleconference call with the Office of Special Education Programs staff members Judy Gregorian and Ken Kienas, established the stage for the important work of the panel in the self-assessment and state improvement planning process. The process of reviewing student dropout data and discussing improvement planning with other divisions within the Office of Public Instruction and with personnel working within the public schools we feel has provided a foundation for developing common and effective strategies for reducing student dropouts. Thus, we have recommended that the Office of Public Instruction coordinate its efforts across projects to address this area.

The progress the state has made in implementing strategies identified in its biennial report and improvement plan is impressive and exciting.

Submitted by:

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Sarah Eyer, Chair  
Montana Special Education Advisory Panel

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Date

## **Overview**

In accord with CFR 300.650, of the Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA), Montana has established the Special Education Advisory Panel. The responsibilities of this state advisory panel are to:

- Advise the Office of Public Instruction of unmet needs within the state in the education of children with disabilities;
- Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- Advise the Office of Public Instruction in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under Section 618 of the Act;
- Advise the Office of Public Instruction in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act;
- Advise the Office of Public Instruction in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and
- Advise on the education of eligible students with disabilities who have been convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons.

In addition to the above, the advisory panel serves as the steering/advisory committee for Montana's planning for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. In this capacity, the advisory panel, on a continuing basis, reviews statewide outcome data on key indicators for students with disabilities, advises the Office of Public Instruction on improvement strategies for improved outcomes and reviews progress on the key indicators on no less than an annual basis.

Following is the annual report of the panel for the 2002-2003 school year. During this reporting period, there were four scheduled meetings. A list of meeting dates, panel membership and a summary of panel activities are given below.

## **Membership**

The Montana Special Education Advisory Panel is formed of a broad representation of individuals with knowledge and expertise on needs of children with disabilities. Appointments to the panel are made by Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch on an annual basis for up to a maximum of a three year-term. Following is the 2002-2003 membership list of the panel and the areas they represented:

Russ Bean  
Judith Herzog  
Gwen Beyer

State/Local Administrator  
Business Concerned With Transitions  
Part C/IDEA Representative

Linda Christensen  
Patrice MacDonald  
Cecilia Cowie  
Sarah Eyer\*\*\*  
Kathleen Mudd\*\*  
Steve Gibson  
Holly Raser  
Jeff Stelloh  
Jeff Handelin  
Karla Wohlwend\*

Higher Education  
Regular Classroom Teacher  
State Agency  
Teacher of Children With Disabilities  
Parent of a Child With Disabilities  
Juvenile and Adult Corrections  
Legislator  
Private School Representative  
Student Representative  
Special Education, Program Administrator

\* Incoming Chair  
\*\* Secretary  
\*\*\* Panel Chair

## **Meetings**

The Special Education Advisory Panel met in Helena four times during state fiscal year FY'03 on the following dates.

September 24-25, 2002  
March 27-28, 2003

January 30-31, 2003  
June 12-13, 2003

Notice of panel meetings were sent to local newspapers and posted on the Office of Public Instruction Web site. A public comment period was made available at each meeting and accommodations provided, when requested.

## **Panel Focus**

The panel focused its activities this year on two primary areas:

Review Of Progress On Improvement Plan Strategies As Identified In The Biennial Performance Report

Self-Assessment: Student Dropouts

In addition, the panel had presentations on topics that were of immediate relevance to improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

To assist the panel in its work, guest speakers were invited to provide presentations on relevant topics and to participate in discussion of the issues. Presentations were made on the following:

- State Improvement Planning: The Federal Perspective, Role of the Special Education Advisory Panel, Conducting the Self-Assessment
- School- Based Mental Health-Based Services
- State Improvement Grant: Evaluation/Impact Studies, We Teach All/ Differentiated Instruction
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development: Mentoring Project, Montana Behavioral Initiative, Paraprofessional Consortium, Blind Initiative Training, Educational Interpreter Certificate Project, Institute of Applied Behavioral Analysis Training, Special Education Endorsement Project, Speech-Language Pathology Stipends
- Medicaid: Medicaid Refinancing
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Requirements and Implications for Special Education
- Student Dropout: Special Education Data Collection, Supervision Enhancement Grant, Student Dropout Data, Success in Reducing School Dropout—Arlee Schools, Montana American Indian Dropout Prevention Project (MAIDPP)
- Federal and State Funding
- State Legislation
- IDEA Reauthorization
- Educator Licensure: Chapter 57 Revisions
- Complaints/Due Process Annual Summary

## **Recommendations And Accomplishments Of The 2002-2003 Special Education Advisory Panel**

In its role as the advisory/steering committee for state improvement planning for students with disabilities under IDEA, the panel reviewed statewide dropout data for students with disabilities, held a joint meeting to discuss student dropout issues with the State Council for Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, heard presentations from personnel who are implementing strategies to decrease student dropout and discussed state improvement planning to decrease student dropout.

The panel recommended that the Division of Special Education, in collaboration with the Montana American Indian Dropout Prevention Project and other Office of Public Instruction efforts, develop a coordinated improvement plan to address the issue of student dropout and that the Office of Public Instruction continue to study the issue and identify effective strategies addressing the dropout problem.

The panel reviewed the proposed changes to IDEA and submitted a letter thanking the Senate HELP Committee and the authors of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2003 for their responsiveness to recommendations for improvement to the IDEA.

Sarah Eyer, panel chair, attended the Office of Special Education Programs Leadership (OSEP) Conference in Washington, D.C., in May 2002.

The Panel reviewed the strategies currently being implemented as part of the state's improvement plan to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, was in support of the activities and did not recommend any changes.

### **Recognition**

The panel wishes to recognize the following individuals for their presentations and provision of resource materials to assist the panel in its work:

John Copenhaver, Director, MPRRC

Office of Public Instruction Staff

Robert Runkel	Marilyn Pearson
Susan Bailey-Anderson	Frank Podobnik
Dick Trerise	Francisco Roman
Nikki Sandve	Doug Doty
Dan McCarthy	Mike Chapman
Pat Reichert	Lynn Hinch
Nancy Coopersmith	BJ Granbery
Diane Sands	Ron Lukenbill

Gail McGregor, University of Montana—Rural Institute

Tammy Elser, Arlee Schools

Paraprofessional Consortium

Deb Peterson  
Mary Drysdale

Dennis Moore, Director, Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK)

State Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council Members

Marlene Wallis, Office of Public Instruction, for the support she provided to the panel by taking excellent minutes, providing materials and making meeting arrangements.